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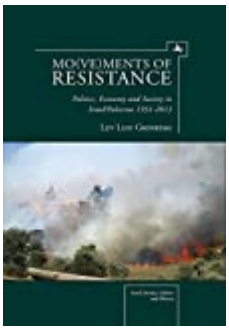

Lev Luis Grinberg. *Mo(ve)ments of Resistance: Politics, Economy and Society in Israel/Palestine, 1931-2013.* Israel: Society, Culture, and History Series. Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2014. 250 pp. $34.00 (paper), ISBN 978-1-61811-378-8; $85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-936235-41-4.

Reviewed by Bassam Abed (New York University)

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Commissioned by Gary Roth (Rutgers University - Newark)

Moments of Resistance in Israel/Palestine

The clever but awkward parentheses in the title of this book represent the authorâs attempt to intertwine two aspects of political movements of resistance: *movement*, which he defines as the âattempt to open political space through physical presentation of power,â and *moment*, a time frame that begins with âthe initial intrusion [of the movement] into the public sphere.â The moment of any movement of resistance can be of short or long duration, and the success of a movement hinges on its ability not only to initiate opening political space, but also to sustain itself in a manner that permits it to achieve its goals. If the movement is unable to position itself for the duration of the right moment, it is destined to fail, since the moment will end as soon as âits agendas, claims, and ideas no longer attract political interest after the problem is considered to have been solved, with the group [either] legitimately represented, or successfully marginalized by political or state actorsâ (p. 54). In this sense, therefore, the concept of mo(ve)ments acquires a specific meaning as the âpeculiar intersection of the movement and the moment of mass mobilization,â setting it apart from other known concepts of social movement research, such as âcycles of protestâ and âpolitical opportunities structureâ (p. 55). The mo(ve)ment will invariably give rise to a reactionary countermovement that aims to manipulate and subvert the goals of the movement, thus bringing about its demise.

Using the analytical tool of political space, defined as the âsymbolic space of representation of subordinated social forcesâ within a âspecific sphere of power relations,â Lev Luis Grinberg ties his analysis of movements and moments of resistance to the struggle over the opening and closing of political space, a struggle that takes place in the political arena âthrough the contestations of political actorsâ as well as âsocial and state actorsâ (pp. 21, 43). To illustrate and explain the relationship between movements and moments on the one hand, and the opening and closure of political space on the other, Grinberg discusses seven specific examples of resistance movements in the history of Israel/Palestine, all of which sought the âopening of political space for recognition and representation of demands, identities, and agendas of subordinated pop-

ulationsâ (p. 275). Each of the case studies is presented in a separate, highly structured chapter that frankly leaves the reader with the feeling that these chapters (chapters 2-7, all translated from the Hebrew by Amy Asher) were written as separate articles, later joined and woven together by a conceptual and theoretical framework that works sometimes, but by no means all of the time.

The seven case studies are analyzed chronologically, starting in chapter 2 with a little-known and short-lived transportation strike that took place in 1931 during the British Mandate rule over Palestine. In what was arguably a unique instance of joint action, Arab and Jewish bus and truck drivers went on strike to protest new taxes levied by the British government. What started initially as a historic moment of Arab and Jewish workers joining forces on the basis of common class and economic interest was quickly undermined and thwarted by the Histadrut (Hebrew acronym for the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel), described by Grinberg as a âquasi-stateâ operating to protect the interests of Jewish workers and to ensure the fulfillment of the Zionist project in Mandate Palestine (p. 68). The Histadrut pursued a strategy of economic and social segregation of Arab and Jewish workers, in accordance with the Zionist aim of first âcarving out the symbolic borders in preparation for the physical borders of the state,â namely, Israel, to be established seventeen years later (p. 88). Thus the brief opening of a shared Jewish-Arab political space, which was occasioned by the joint bus and truck driversâ strike and could have given rise to a new and larger sphere of shared civil society organizations based on classic Marxian notions of class interest, was quickly closed by a Zionist strategy, implemented by the Histadrut, which was designed to âexclude non-Jewishâ populations from the economic sphere (p. 89).

Two other movements, discussed in chapters 3 and 5, focus on ethnic riots that were sparked by Mizrahi Jewish resentment against the discriminatory policies and practices of the dominant Ashkenazi elite following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The Wadi Salib riots of 1959 and the Black Panther movement of 1971 sought the opening of political space for an ethnic Mizrahi Israeli Jewish category composed of an unrepresented, marginalized, and persecuted minority of Arab Jews who faced intense discrimination after immigrating to Israel in the 1950s and were housed in peripheral and isolated âdevelopment townsâ and expropriated Palestinian houses and properties in cities throughout Israel. From the perspective of the Israeli state, these new immigrants were destined not just to occupy the physical space of the departed Palestinians, but also to fulfill what would have been their economic functions in agriculture, construction, and service. Instead of opening political space for the Mizrahim, however, the short-lived Wadi Salib riots were suppressed by an alliance of forces comprising what Grinberg calls the âVicious Triangleâ: the Israeli state; the Histadrut; and Mapai, the Israeli Workers Party, which later morphed into the Labor Party. The Vicious Triangle pursued a strategy of manipulative delegitimization of the Mizrahi claims, presenting them as an essential negation of the Zionist melting pot ideal. By rejecting the legitimacy of Mizrahi grievances and painting the riots as the work of criminals and hooligans, comparable to the violence of Kristallnacht as the mayor of an Israeli town explained, the forces of the Vicious Triangle cynically but effectively manipulated party politics, ensuring electoral gains for Mapai, which emerged in the 1959 elections as the party that embodied true Zionism and as the political protector of Israelâs Ashkenazi population. By contrast, the Black Panthers movement (discussed in chapter 5), which lasted for four years, was able to open political space for the recognition of Mizrahi claims, but quickly lost ground once its leadership started identifying with the rights of the Palestinians as oppressed people. Ironically, the only beneficiaries of the opening of political space initiated by the Black Panthers were members of the Likud Party, led by former Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin. In their attempt to gain power, they resorted to invoking âtribal mobilization,â a strategy dominated by âtribal symbols, language, and myths,â focused on âhatred and fear of the Otherâ (p. 179). This effectively shifted the debate away from focusing on political ideas of how the state should cope with class conflict or ethnic discrimination and instead emerged as an atavistic call for mobilization of Zionist ideas and goals in strict opposition to the Palestinians, now presented as the embodiment of a threatening otherness. Once again, an effective countermovement succeeded in manipulating the aims of the movement and ensured the closing of political space opened by the Black Panther movement.

Two other case studies, discussed in chapters 4 and 6, focus on working-class resistance to the Israeli stateâs economic order. The first concerns what has been called the âAction Committees Revolt,â which lasted from 1960 to 1965, a period of full employment that saw the homogenization of working conditions and the weakening of Mizrahi and Ashkenazi, as well as Arab and Jewish, ethnic divisions; this period saw the emergence of a new sense of class solidarity and âa âproactive offen-

siveâ wave of rank-and-file wildcat strikes leading to significant improvement of real wagesâ (pp. 279-280). The second, known as the âForum/13ââan alliance of thirteen entities representing government workers in various industries and servicesâwas formed in 1979 in opposition to the economic policies initiated by the newly appointed treasury minister Yigal Horowitz in response to the recession of 1979. A highly effective general strike in 1980 succeeded in checking the power of the state by achieving a series of goals beneficial to the working class. Once again, however, the political space that was opened in both instances was quickly closed, though in different ways. The Action Committees Revolt was eventually marginalized and rendered useless by the empowerment of the stateâs military apparatus and institutions, soon after Israel conquered the West Bank and absorbed a new class of very cheap labor from the ranks of the Palestinians. The demands of Forum/13, on the other hand, were eventually compromised by the implementation of widespread neoliberal economic policies by the National Unity Government (NUG), a coalition of the Labor and Likud parties, formed in the early 1980s.

The first Palestinian Intifada, 1987-92, is the subject of the case study in chapter 7. The first Intifada is analyzed here in the framework of anticolonial struggle, like the 1931 transportation strike against the British Mandate authorities, but this time against the Israeli (colonial) military occupation in 1987. A significant impetus for the outbreak of the Intifada was the worsening economic conditions brought about by the neoliberal policies pursued by Israel, and by the physical as well as the âsymbolic violenceâ of the Israeli state in its complete disregard for the needs and demands of the occupied Palestinian population (pp. 283-284). Through an effective strategy that combined an economic and labor boycott of Israel with mass demonstrations and civil disobedience, the Palestinians were able to open political space for the recognition of their legitimate grievances against Israelâs military and colonial occupation. The opening, however, was brief, coming to a quick closure as Israel and its supporters managed to co-opt Yasser Arafat and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization into signing the Oslo Accords in 1993, thereby effectively ending any possibility of a meaningful resolution to the national and political demands of the Palestinian people. The moment of the movement disappeared as a powerful countermovement quickly closed political space, neutralizing the achievements of the first Intifada. By installing Arafat in the occupied territories, Israel was provided with a cheaper, more effective, and stable regime. The Oslo Accords divided the Palestinians under occupation and allowed Israel to transform its economy by disentangling it from a web of reliance on Palestinian labor and markets in favor of imported and easily controlled cheap foreign labor from Asia and elsewhere. Israelâs reliance on Palestinian labor was severely curtailed, effectively eliminating any economic damage that a Palestinian labor strike would have inflicted on the Israeli economy, as was later evidenced by the failure of the second Intifada.

The final case study, and the focus of Grinbergâs current research, is the movement that came to be known as âJ14,â an âOccupyâ-style protest movement that erupted in the summer of 2011 in the wake of what came to be known as the Arab Spring, the series of protest movements that broke out throughout the Arab world. J14 was particularly inspired by the events at Cairoâs Tahrir Square in neighboring Egypt. Thousands of Israeli youth took to the streets to protest against increasing socioeconomic inequality, particularly the lack of affordable housing brought about by the governmentâs neoliberal economic policies. The tremendous support that the movement received from the Israeli public, which culminated in the âOne Million March,â forced the government to address, at least temporarily, the demands of the protesters, including new taxes on the rich, reduction of military expenditure, and new measures to alleviate poverty. The movementâs leaders then dismantled their âoccupyâ structures and called off their protests. The mass mobilization that J14 enjoyed quickly evaporated; the âmoment of the movement had passedâ and the briefly opened political space was quickly shut down, allowing the government to revert to its old neoliberal policies that continue to shape Israelâs economy today (p. 252).

As Grinberg explains in the bookâs prologue, these seven case studies represent the evolution of his research interests since he immigrated to Israel from Argentina in 1972. Influenced by Latin American social movement theories and trained as a sociologist, Grinberg delved deeply and critically into the intricacies of political and social movements in the history of Israel/Palestine, trying to âunlock the puzzle of Israeli politics; its incredible success in closing political space to all subordinated populations while maintaining a democratic image rarely questioned by its citizens or the international community.â To him Israel was a âstrange country where capitalists were called socialists or leftists, while large sections of the working class were avowed nationalists and supported the rightâ (p. 21). Deeply critical of the Israeli state, Grinberg concludes that Israeli democracy is âonly

imagined, it cannot be realizedâ (p. 31). While his critique of the Israeli stateâs policies and actions is convincing and appropriate, I wish more attention had been paid to a critique of Zionism itself, both as an ideology and as a program. When he writes âI do not believe Zionism necessarily had to deteriorate to such low ebb as it has since 2000â, he seems to be accepting its underlying exclusionary principles as appropriate and unquestioned (p. 18). I believe an argument can be made that what has been happening since 2000 is precisely the logical outcome of Zionism as an ideology based on exclusion.

This is a dense and demanding book that requires the readerâs close attention. Its scope is vast and its goals are ambitious; it is based on an eclectic, yet coherent, set of theoretical principles and premises that draw on the works of a very diverse group of thinkers, ranging from Hanna Arendt and Pierre Bourdieu to Benedict Anderson and Theda Skocpol. In addition to drawing on his own work, Grinberg incorporates the works of many historians of Israel/Palestine, including Baruch Kimmerling, Yonatan Shapiro, Gershon Shafir, and Yoav Peled. At times, frankly, the readerâs task of following the various threads becomes somewhat daunting, if not outright confusing. Apparently aware of the demands that he places on the reader, Grinberg resorts to frequent repetition of the various points and arguments that he is trying to make. This is initially useful, but eventually proves to be tiresome and leads the reader to question why Grinberg insists on repeating things over and over again, as if he himself is not totally convinced of the appropriateness of his model to the various case studies that form the bulk of the book. The intertwining of movements and moments and the notion of the opening and closing of political space are interesting and worthwhile ideas that deserve serious attention, but I am not sure that they can be invoked to explain all seven cases with the same heuristic value that the author wishes them to have. I am not altogether convinced that these notions are really useful for explaining the first Palestinian Intifada, for example. Although deeply critical of the Israeli state and the occupation, Grinberg views the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as an almost benign âexternally imposed regime that attempts to contain resistance by way of recognition and negotiations,â in contrast to âextremely repressive regimes which regularly use violence and secret services to penetrate civil society and prevent its organization, arresting and often killing their opponentsâ (p. 276). This hardly fits the experience of the Palestinians living under occupation, where violence and secret service penetration of civil society are the daily norm of most Palestinians. Nor am I clear about how these analytical tools explain the rise and demise of the Mizrahi Black Panther movement. A more convincing case can be made for their applicability to the working-class and labor unrest movements discussed in chapters 4, 6, and 8.

In addition to its theoretical shortcomings, the book has some serious stylistic and editorial problems, including frequent repetitions; an enforced structure requiring chapters to each have their own introduction and conclusion; lapses in comprehensibility that may arise from translation issues; and a need for thorough editing (or re-editing) throughout, especially in the conclusion. Nevertheless, this book represents a valuable contribution to the theoretical and historical literature on social and political movements. Some might find the distinction Grinberg makes between social movements of resistance and his own notion of âmo(ve)ments of resistanceâ arbitrary and artificial, and therefore of little value. I think it is worthy of further investigation, because drawing attention to the crucial role that both time and timing play in the success, or failure, of any social movement, though hardly novel, is important, despite the fact that analyzing the role of time in the genesis and endurance of political space is always done in retrospect, always after the fact. Less convincing, however, is Grinbergâs methodological notion of âabduction,â which is neither induction nor deduction, but is the âreadiness to be surprised by the dynamic power relations uncovered by mo(ve)ments of resistanceâ (p. 277). This concept is unclear and confusing, and its methodological utility frankly escapes me.

The book will be of interest to students of Israel/Palestine, especially those who are concerned with the distorting impact of Zionist ideology on Israeli society and economy. By drawing attention to the relationship between the moment and the movement, this book provides an interesting and useful approach for scholars who wish to integrate a structural time frame in explaining the rise and fall of social movements.

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